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RESEARCHES AND TRANSACTIONS
OF
THE NEW YORK STATE ARCHEOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION

LEWIS H. MORGAN CHAPTER
ROCHESTER, N. Y.

Western New York Under the French

BY

DR. FRANK H. SEVERANCE,
Sec'y Buffalo Historical Society
Buffalo, N. Y.

An address delivered before the Morgan Chapter in Memorial Art Gallery, University Campus, Rochester, N. Y., December 19, 1919.

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Morgan Chapter, Rochester, N. Y.

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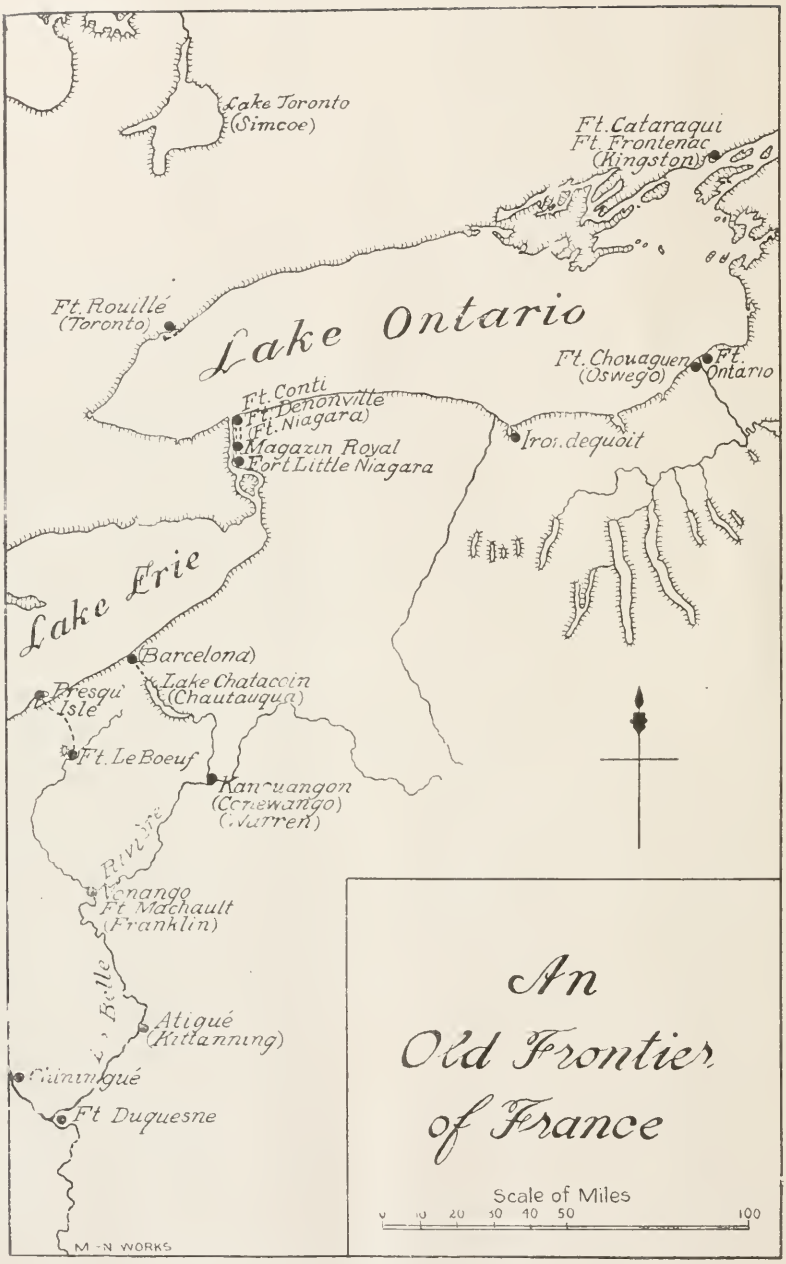

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WESTERN NEW YORK UNDER THE FRENCH

By FRANK H. SEVERANCE

Secretary of the Buffalo Historical Society, Buffalo, N. Y.

I thank you for the privilege of meeting with you to-night, but I am haunted by the feeling that I should address you on an archaeological subject. This I cannot do. My theme is history; but it is a history that runs back so far that in some of its phases it supplies material for the archaeologist. I invite you to consider with me for a little while typical events which mark the course of history in what is now Western New York, in the days when this part of our country was under the domination of France.

We forget sometimes how far back white man's history hereabouts really reaches. Not long ago I had a call in my office from a New England woman, a Boston schoolmistress, very intelligent, very alert, as they all are. After asking many questions about the history of our region, she remarked, reflectively, "But you are so new here, you can't have much history." I might have replied, had I been readier, that white man's history on the Niagara runs back as far as it does on Massachusetts Bay, but she had gone back to Boston before I thought of it. I am usually that way in repartee or apt replies. I think of them a week or so too late. However, it is just as well. She might have challenged my statement—some of these New Englanders take their Norumbega legend very seriously!

However, I stand by the statement: It is true of our region that white men were here before the Pilgrims had pressed foot on Plymouth Rock. It is true that white men were making history in Western New York, and history of wide significance, as early as they were in Massachusetts, although I fancy you will hardly find in any of the books that this phase of our early history is much emphasized.

In a brief offhand talk, such as this must be, I can only attempt to touch a few typical episodes, but I shall try to select such phases of our early history as are not merely local in

significance, but which truly relate the evolution of our home region to the evolution of America. And let it be noted at the outset that the first chapter, the beginnings hereabouts, are different from what we find oftentimes in the early history of a region. The first chapter in history, you will recall, is often a story of ruthless conquest, of greed for land, or a search for gold. Not so here. The beginnings of white man's history in Western New York are a story of the bringing hither of the gospel of peace and good-will. It is true here that the Christian cross was raised before the sword was drawn. Hereabouts the Christian altar was set up before the hearth was laid. It is only in some such sweeping phrases that I can epitomize seventy years of early missionary work among the aborigines of Western New York. Those early Christian workers were of three holy orders: The Franciscans, the Sulpitians and the Jesuits. Into the scattered Indian villages of this region, the black-robed missionaries of this last-named Society came in considerable numbers throughout the latter half of the 17th century. The villages where they labored have been located, some of them, by your archaeologists, whose excavations and researches help the historian to-day to reconstruct the conditions which these pioneer priests found when they cast in their adventurous lot among savages in a wilderness. I need but mention the names of some of these devoted men—Fremin, Garnier, Bruyas, Menart, Vaillant—we might make a considerable list—to remind you of how important in our history this early chapter of missionary work really is. Those I have named came into the region, for the most part, from the eastward; but others, some of them of the earliest, came from beyond the Niagara. There was Joseph de la Roche Dallion, whose work among the Neuters in the Niagara region was as early as 1627. By the way, if we wish a date for a definite starting-point in our story, we may go back still further to the year 1615, when Champlain is known to have crossed Lake Ontario from the north, coming into Central New York; and when his interpreter, that half-mythical "pioneer of pioneers," as Parkman has styled him, Etienne Brulé, apparently came into the Niagara region and of a certainty crossed through Western New York on his hazardous mission

from Canada to the tribes of the Susquehanna. Of his return to our region and of his torture by Western New York savages, and something of his subsequent career, there is fairly definite, though very meager chronicle. He was the forerunner of the missionaries.

In the long roll of men who in those early years gave up all the comforts of life, who hazarded even existence itself, for the sake of bringing Christian teaching to the Indians, I dwell for a moment on one heroic figure, typical of many.

It was in November, 1640, when the Jesuit Fathers Brebeuf and Chaumonot came from the vicinity of the Georgian Bay, through the Niagara Peninsula and across the Niagara, proceeding eastward apparently to the neighborhood of Lockport. They had undertaken a missionary visit to the Neuter Indians, whose habitat at that time reached apparently as far eastward as the point indicated. Here they spent the winter months. The story of their experiences, which I cannot stop to relate in detail, is a very somber and tragic one. They were scarcely tolerated in the Indian villages where they sought to plant the cross and to teach Christianity. The articles of their holy office were stolen from them, they well nigh starved, often they were refused shelter; there was no outcast mongrel dog but was better treated than they. Towards the end of winter, despairing of any satisfactory fruits of their labors, they retraced their steps and crossed the Niagara, bound northward towards the mission establishment of St. Mary's on the Wye. There has come down to us a unique chronicle of their experience in the Niagara region. At the end of a day's march through the snow, they had sought an Indian hut for a night's shelter. Before going to rest, Father Brebeuf, to escape the acrid smoke of the hut and to find peace in solitude, went out into the forest to pray. As his thoughts ascended to Heaven in devotion, there appeared before him in the starlit heavens, a huge luminous cross. It appeared to approach him from the land of the Neuters. Overcome with emotion,—or to use the words of a sympathetic chronicle, "emparadised in ecstasy"—the priest saw in the wonderful symbol the presage of his own martyrdom. Throwing wide his arms, he cried: "*Sentio me vehementer impelli ad moriendum pro Christo*"—"I feel within me a mighty

impulse to die for Christ''—and falling on his knees in the snow he registered his wonderful vow, to meet martyrdom when it should come in a spirit befitting a servant of his Lord and Master. When he came to himself, the cross had faded, the stars were shining in the wintry sky, and the icy cold was clasping him in its clutches. Painfully he retraced his steps to the cabin and laid him down to rest. The next morning, as they journeyed on, he told of his vision. ''Was the cross large?'' asked Chaumonot. ''Large?'' said Brebeuf, ''yes; large enough to crucify us all.''

Now, I hear you saying to yourselves, ''But that is not history; that is legend; that is myth; that is the result of religious fervor;'' or perhaps you say with Parkman, that it is simply ''psychology.'' Interpret it as you will, my friends, I care not what your faith may be or whether you have no faith at all; but we cannot escape the facts, and as students of our history we must recognize that in this narration there is embodied a record which symbolizes the devoted work of many honest and spiritually-minded men throughout many years in this region. To me the story of the great cross, the experience of Father Brebeuf, the Constantine of Western New York, stands as a welcome reminder of unselfish and heroic devotion to the welfare of others.

Let this suffice for the missionary period, though I need not remind the student of our history that the missionary to the Indians, or the priest, as chaplain to the soldiers, was never absent wherever France sent her forces in any number. But after the period which was distinctively missionary, our history takes other aspects. Indeed as I recall it, it unrolls like the photographic film of the moving picture, so that as we view it we can see our early history pass as it were in pictorial fashion. Always with the background of these Western New York hills and forests, lakes and rivers, there passes a strange procession. First, as I have said, the missionary priest in his black cassock or in the brown robe with the heavy cord, carrying his portable altar on his back; and with him and after him, the explorer, oftentimes the man half French, half Indian, with European antecedents, and yet truly a son of the wilderness; the boatman, the *voyageur,* singing the songs of old Anjou and Lorraine; the

coureur du bois, the woodranger, with perhaps family ties at Quebec, or Three Rivers, or Montreal, yet hesitating not to make domestic ties among whatever Indian village the fortunes of the fur trade brought him into; and then came the trained soldier of France, with the purpose not merely to profit by the Indian trade, which was essentially the barter of liquor and of trifles for fur, but to establish posts, frontier garrisons, for the sake of controlling the travel through the country and gaining a new empire for France. And with these little frontier armies there came also the civilian, the trader, ready to profit by the amazing opportunities of graft and fraud which the frontier trade offered. There came the dignitaries of New France, on official visits; and there even came, now and then, into this wilderness, diplomatic representatives and courtiers from Paris and Versailles, who brought into our region some of the refinements of old France and with their high living, their fine wines, their niceties of dress, won the envy of savage warriors whose previous ideas of the toilet had been limited by vermilion, grease and feathers. These are some of the figures that move across the canvas, that make up the moving picture of our early history; figures for the most part typical of the continent-wide phase of the evolution which as students, we seek to know.

The religious impulse was the first that sent white men into our region. But not far behind it came the trade spirit. If charity and good-will came first, greed and self-interest followed close after. Many an expedition which we designate as having been undertaken for exploration, had its real underlying purpose in a desire to seek out and occupy regions which should be profitable for trade. Indeed, the history of our region, for a century or more under the French, may be symbolized by a beaver skin, held, shall we say, at its four corners by a Frenchman, an Englishman, a Dutchman and an Indian, the poor Dutchman early bowled over in the strife, the Englishman and the Frenchman always seeking to circumvent the other and each currying favor with the red man, who was ever at a loss as to where his real interest lay, and ready with whatever ally he had at the moment to stick a knife into the back of his foe. It was truly an international strife for the control of the resources of a vast region. The Indian was always at a great

disadvantage, for he had no idea of property values, nor was he ever strong enough numerically to withstand the incoming tide of his foes.

Of all the men who led expeditions through Western New York and the region of the Lakes, and thence westward or southward, La Salle stands preëminent. He was in many respects without peer or rival, but he was by no means the only man of his kind. Year after year expeditions were sent hither, led by gallant men, but of many of these adventurers only the slightest record remains. In your immediate neighborhood here at Rochester, history-making began a new chapter with the first coming of La Salle, in 1669. On that early journey he undoubtedly saw the shores of Irondequoit Bay and followed trails ancient even then, with the remains of which some of you, students of the past, are no doubt familiar. Of his greater adventure, in 1678 and '79, I do not need to speak at this time, for it has been made probably the most familiar episode in all the history of our region under the French. More to our purpose was the later expedition, led by Denonville, which, in 1687, came to Irondequoit, marched a little army a few miles south, destroyed some Indian villages, the sites of which still furnish pleasant occupation to the archaeologist, and finally withdrew from the region, having built at the mouth of the Niagara a fort, which did not last long; and having won as the sum total of his expedition nothing more substantial than the increased enmity of the Indians. Here was a short-sighted attempt to establish authority which reacted against the French from Denonville's time down to the English conquest. Although there were times when the Senecas professed allegiance to France, although there were instances of friendship, there never was a time when the Senecas as a whole were not suspicious of the government at Quebec and ready to betray the French who came into the region, into the hands of the English, if they thought their own interests could be advanced by so doing.

May I remind you that the story of Western New York under the French is not, save in slightest degree, a story of settlement. There is marked contrast between the French on the Detroit, where they went avowedly for settlement and home-making, and the French on the Niagara, which they

occupied merely to control the passage to regions beyond. The French knew and traversed many Western New York paths, but save in temporary fashion and for trade purposes, they did not attempt settlement in the region east of the Niagara; though from the Treaty of Utrecht they claimed title to it and jurisdiction over its tribes.

Far more certain was their control of the Great Lakes. They navigated Lake Ontario, without challenge or competitor, for well nigh a century and a half—if we reckon from Champlain's first coming, to the building of the first vessel by the English for those waters. From the days of La Salle and Denonville down to the end of the French period the story of Lake Ontario appeals by its very meagerness to the imagination. Never wholly deserted by traders, it was more than once the theater of scenes of violence and outlawry. The French, realizing more and more its splendid possibilities, sent into it goodly store of trading goods; and, in the earlier days, kept in commission one or two primitive brigantines, which skirted the forested shores, made port of call wherever barter could be had, and cruised without hindrance and with no mean seamanship these lonely wilderness waters. Wind and wave and seasons' changes, seemingly so fickle, were then as now; but the intrepid navigator of those distant years had little to rely on save his own resources and the Providence which attends the daring. There were no charts to show channel or reef, rock or shoal, save such as he might sketch from his own discoveries; no lights to warn or guide; no harbors even, save such as nature made: yet every glimpse we have of the life of old, shows the lake sailors of those days as a happy-go-lucky crew who knew the ins and outs of Ontario's shores, rocky isles and tortuous channels, as no manner of men have known them since, and who bore into every bay and anchorage the white flag of the Bourbon kings.

To-day, the leisured yachtsman making holiday, moors his shining craft in some pellucid cove. As evening falls, the lap of wavelets at his vessel's side, the incense of his ruminative pipe, lull his soul into a receptive sense of sights and sounds unheeded in the bright and busy day. Dimly through the dusk, around the neighboring point he sees a strange-shaped vessel

glide. He hears the creak of a gaff, the muffled clatter of lowering sail, calls and commands in a tongue half known, half strange; the splash of an anchor and the rhythm of a running chain. The August moon makes silhouette of a distant pine, the drowsy breeze brings refrain of some foolish, haunting melody of the old régime, of the days when the hardy sons of France, sailing these wilderness waters as their own, still like the children they were, sang the songs of Anjou, of Brittany or Lorraine. Lulled to the border-land of sleep, our summer sailor vows to seek at daybreak the unknown craft—but with the first sun-glint, his thought is for the morning plunge, the glorious swim; and like the vanishing wisps of mist, fades the memory of his brief and shadowy comradeship with the old-time *voyageurs* and sailors of the Ontario sea.

Whoever seeks to trace the evolution of our regional history will advance by a series of steps, each logically the outcome of what has gone before.

The colony of New France was a great burden to old France. To increase its revenues, it sought to develop the fur trade. To this end, traders were licensed to come into the Indian country, with goods and liquor for barter; and although the restrictions governing this trade varied from time to time, it is true that, as a general thing, the Government encouraged the traffic, and was very liberal with both traders and Indians. The traders especially sought favor with the Onondagas, whose control was paramount among the Iroquois, and among the Senecas, who were not only the most powerful of the tribes, but who, being the westernmost occupant of "the long house," had readier access to the beaver-bearing regions. Still more important was their control of travel routes. No trader could venture up the valley of the Genesee, or over the Niagara portage, unless reasonably sure of the friendship—at least of the temporary toleration—of the guardian Senecas. Many tribes came to the Niagara to trade, some of them, such as the Delawares and Shawanese, from the Ohio and regions to the southward; others, of Algonquin stock, from the Upper Lakes and beyond. Both the French and the English very early recognized the necessity of gaining control of the Niagara portage, for it was the key to the trade of the vast West and South; nor could there be any

safe occupancy or traffic in Central and Western New York, without assurance that the Niagara was in friendly hands. The English, after one or two abortive attempts to trade in the Lakes region, withdrew from the field and bided their time for half a century; but the French, from the opening years of the Eighteenth century, set out deliberately to gain and to hold that pass. They made no show of force; but with a craftiness worthy of the Seneca himself, they sent among the savages young men who were to serve as interpreters; but who, growing up in Indian villages, gained the friendship of the aborigines, and were adopted into the tribes.

The course of history in Western New York for many years—for more than a half century—was really determined by a few men of this type. There was the elder Chauvignerie, who virtually lived and worked for many years among the Onondagas. There was, very notably, the second Baron de Longueuil, to whose tact and persistence was due the reluctant consent of the Onondagas that the French might build Fort Niagara, at the mouth of the river. De Longueuil, you will recall, was a member of the Le Moyne family of Canada— a family which, in my judgment, has never received quite its full meed of credit for the part it bore in American history. I have elsewhere* indicated, inadequately, some of their achievements, and will only remind you now that it was Charles Le Moyne the younger who not only gained the Indian consent, which emboldened the French to build Fort Niagara and to assume control of the portage, but it was he who was the first commandant of that storied post, thus beginning a succession which, under three successive flags, has continued to this day.

The Le Moynes were aristocrats, rich and powerful. Another family, neither rich nor politically powerful, proved of even greater usefulness to France throughout the early decades of the Eighteenth century, in gaining the fickle friendship of the Iroquois, in securing to Canada the bulk of the fur trade, and most important of all, in making it possible for the French to establish themselves on the Niagara and at other

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* See "An Old Frontier of France," Vol. 1, pp. 244, 245. I have in this address utilized one or two anecdotes from the same work, thinking it permissible to quote from myself without explicit credit.

strategic points. What the Court of Louis XIV and XV could not do by decree or show of arms, was accomplished by men of this untitled, perhaps unlettered family, who through two generations more than anyone else, made the history of Western New York.

I refer to the Joncaires, father and sons. The father came to Canada as a lad, in the latter years of the Seventeenth century. Taken captive by the Indians, he grew up among savages, early mastered several Iroquois dialects, and was thus after his ransom able to render exceptionally efficient service as interpreter throughout a long life. While still a young man, he came into Western New York, the agent of the Canadian Government, and it was he who first established the French in trade on the banks of the Niagara. It was this Niagara trading-house, built in 1720, which so provoked the English that they undertook a counter-move and established themselves at Oswego. Oswego was practically the only foothold which the English gained in what is now New York State, west of the Mohawk Valley, down to the overthrow of the French in 1760. It is true that they made attempts to occupy other points, especially Irondequoit Bay. From time to time they conducted negotiations with the Senecas for permission to trade in their country, but nothing came of it, chiefly because this French agent, Joncaire, had so adroitly established himself in the good-will of the Senecas that the French remained in their enjoyment of the fur trade of the region. When in 1726 Fort Niagara was built, it was largely to Joncaire that credit was due. He joined his forefathers in 1739, leaving a numerous family—probably leaving two families; one French, one half-breed; but of his children by a French mother, two sons continued the work which the father had begun and for many years were active and successful in promoting the interests of the French in our region; not merely the trade interests, but gradually the establishment of France as a military power at the back of the Alleghanies. One of these sons, usually spoken of as Chabert, shared in many a military expedition into the heart of Western New York or southward from Lake Erie into the Ohio Valley. He is really a notable figure in that period of American history and I regret that I cannot

linger more adequately to sketch his work and to impress upon you his personality. He was at once an interpreter and adoptive son of the Senecas, a commercial agent and a military officer. It was he who brought about the construction of the first French fort above Niagara Falls, and who was its commander. It was he who promoted the building of the chain of wilderness stockade forts southerly from Lake Erie, at Le Boeuf in northwestern Pennsylvania, now Waterford, and at Venango, now Franklin, at the junction of French Creek with the Alleghany. No man in his time was more dreaded and hated by the English. A price was put upon his head. Indeed, the English had ample cause for enmity, for it was Chabert Joncaire more than any other man of the frontier who, during the last years of French occupancy in our region organized those terror-spreading war-parties, which, making their way from Fort Niagara as a base, stealthily followed the forest trails eastward to the Mohawk, southerly to the Chemung, the Susquehanna and other valleys, to fall upon the pioneer outposts, the isolated cabins, to kill the aged, to burn the buildings, to steal the livestock and to take captive the young boys and girls, bringing them back over these hundreds of miles of wilderness paths to Fort Niagara. It was a sort of warfare peculiar to our region. A few years later the British, in alliance with these Western New York Indians, followed exactly the same methods and were responsible for even greater atrocities; but the war-party raid and the capture of young people were a feature of French occupancy and were promoted largely by Chabert Joncaire and a few other capable, hardy, half-savage Frenchmen of his kind.

In considering the aspect of those distant days, one is tempted to reconstruct, as far as his scanty knowledge and imagination serve, the conditions which the French found when they undertook to traverse the paths of Western New York, or to reside for trading purposes among the Indians. We can readily imagine the scattered villages of the Senecas, seated by the clear streams or pleasant lakes of Western New York. The Indians did not dig wells, but they knew the location of every natural spring and in many cases utilized their medicinal properties. The Jesuit missionaries in the region were very early led by them to a burning spring, obviously one of the

natural gas or oil wells of our region. They knew of the presence of petroleum and may have used it as an embrocation; at any rate, it was so used by white men, who styled it "Seneca oil," and put it on the market as an effective cure-all.

When the French first came among the Senecas, the mode of aboriginal village life was already changing; the earlier community house, surrounded by a stockade, had in many instances been abandoned, so that the French found the Indians living in detached huts or cabins, scattered among the trees of the forest, but still retaining a central house, a place of council and of general meeting. When men of the type of Joncaire entered one of these villages, we may readily imagine the joyous greeting that was theirs. They were received as members of the tribe and treated as such. No doubt the Indian's self-interest entered into his hospitality, for the white man invariably brought packs of goods, perhaps a train of followers laden with clothing, food, ammunition and guns. Oftentimes he was accompanied by a gunsmith, who set up his forge in the forest and performed for the Indians the crude but necessary metal-work which they were unable to do for themselves. More and more the Indians came to rely upon the French for the necessities and the luxuries of life. They delighted in ornaments, and liquor they always craved, and with this they were generously supplied by the complaisant government. In return, they were expected to render such service as they could. They were looked to as hunters, to provide game for the French garrisons. They were employed as spies to watch upon the enemy; to make long and incredibly swift journeys on foot or by canoe, to report upon what was taking place among the English. Chief service of all, they were mustered to march under French leadership in whatever direction it seemed possible to make a successful foray.

Relations of this kind, between the aborigines and the incoming French, continued down to the British conquest; but intimate and cordial though they appeared to be, these relations were always in imminent danger of breaking. Treachery ever lurked behind the pledge of friendship. Nowhere was the friendship and service of the Indian more necessary than on the Niagara portage. Here, from days immemorial, they had

controlled the movement of travellers from lake to lake. Those eight miles of arduous climbing around the Falls were a serious hindrance to the passage of expeditions, especially of French military expeditions, burdened with stores which were being transported southward to the posts of the Upper Ohio. In the heavy work of carrying military equipment and garrison supplies around the Falls, the Indians of Western New York found perhaps their first organized employment in connection with the whites. Like all else that the Indian undertook, it was uncertain of accomplishment, likely to be abandoned whenever the whim seized his unstable mind. Native labor was a source of unending vexation and trouble to Chabert at his riverside fort at the head of the portage. A man of exceptional ability in dealing with the Indians, and in meeting the demands of frontier life, he developed into the first labor leader of Western New York. He was for some years absolutely boss of the transportation service of the greatest route which white men followed, from the seaboard to the interior. In the last years of French occupancy, the business of the Niagara portage, under a corrupt administration, offered such amazing opportunities for graft, for theft, and for unlawful enrichment of those who carried it on, that amazing fortunes were piled up by a few knaves in public service, most of whom, later on, found themselves in the Bastille, and were required to make restitution or to undergo banishment for their outrageous conduct of affairs in the transportation on the Lakes and the Niagara towards the close of the French period.

Of the many expeditions which the French sent into the Lake Erie region, one at least should be given a word. It is an expedition which has been singularly ignored by most students of the subject. I refer to a military expedition which New France sent in 1739 against the Chickasaw Indians. Why it was sent to so remote a region, against so seemingly ineffective an enemy, I cannot undertake to discuss now. The interesting point which concerns us in our present study is that this expedition was the first which crossed over the watershed south of Lake Erie into Lake Chautauqua. The credit of that discovery, if it has heretofore been fixed at all, has apparently been given to De Céloron, who led a somewhat similar expedition

ten years later; but that the French penetrated to Lake Chautauqua and passed through it in 1739 is a matter of definite record in contemporary documents.

From that date to the end of the French régime the extreme western part of what is now New York State figures with far more importance than does, for instance, the Valley of the Genesee. The reason of it is plain. France had decided to occupy the Ohio Valley. To that end she sent several military expeditions, some of which, crossing Lake Erie, made their way by Lake Chautauqua, while others, going west as far as Presqu' Isle, now Erie, crossed to the head waters of the LeBoeuf, or French Creek, finding it a more practical road than the Chautauqua route. It may appear to you that the operations of the French in this region, now Western Pennsylvania, are beyond the scope of our particular study this evening. We cannot however divide our theme to correspond with modern geographical lines. The important thing is that throughout the last years of French occupancy, say from 1740 to 1759, a policy was being worked out which involved, not only Western New York but the region to the southward, for the establishment of the French power to the west of the Alleghanies, thus flanking the English in their constant tendency to spread into the region of the Lakes and the Ohio Valley. Western New York was a part of this movement and it is of the greatest importance to recognize the significance of events in our region as related to the development, first, of British power on American soil, and then of that independent movement of the Colonies which finally crystallized into the United States of America.

It was this strife of Great Britain and of France for control and occupancy of the Lakes and of the Ohio Valley, which more than any other cause roused the British colonies to a realization of the need for united action. By 1754 so desperate had become the situation in the disputed region, that the colonies called a convention to consider what should be done. That convention, held in Albany, may fairly be regarded as a starting-point and beginning date in the story of the United States. When I consider it and its far-reaching results, and when I recall even a few of the many events which have taken place at Albany, I am impressed with the very great historic importance of that

old town. There are very few places in the United States that rival it in age—for we may reckon its existence, if not from Hudson's visit in 1609, at any rate from 1614, and there has never been a time throughout the centuries when it has not played an important part in shaping the destiny not merely of the Empire State, but oftentimes of the country as a whole. It was emphatically so in this summer of 1754 when most of the colonies sent their able men to Albany to confer as to what measures should be adopted to thwart the constant encroachments of the French. It is too long a story to dwell upon in detail. We must remember that whatever measures the colonies undertook, even when they tardily realized the value of coöperation, were likely to be nullified by the disapproval of the home government. But still, out of this Albany Conference there did come a united action, there was born a new conception of the value of united effort, which may fairly be regarded as the very foundation-stone of the Republic.

War was declared between France and England early in 1756. It would be tedious to attempt to relate the events of the next three years. It is a story of one ministerial policy proving inefficient and giving way to a more vigorous one. It is the story of abortive campaigns, followed in the end by more thorough preparation, more adequate recruiting and equipping, until finally, in the summer of 1759, we find a British and Colonial army headed by General Prideaux, with Sir William Johnson second in command, making its way along the southern shore of lake Ontario and besieging the French at Fort Niagara. You know the outcome of that not unfamiliar but very picturesque episode in Western New York history. You will recall how, after the accidental killing of Prideaux, Sir William Johnson carried on the siege until old Fort Niagara was virtually blown to pieces and its gallant commandant, Pouchot, capitulated. With the fall of Fort Niagara, the abandonment of the chain of interior posts was inevitable and within a few months the tribes of the region hastened to pledge their allegiance to the new power.

The century-long story of French activities in our region, crowded as it is with episodes full of adventure and romance, is strikingly lacking in the feminine element. Few women

figure in the history of Western New York under the French, but now and then a scattered record gives a glimpse of their presence. Very notable was the coming through Lake Ontario and up the Niagara of the wife of Cadillac, founder of Detroit. With her was Madame Alphonse de Tonti. These ladies came in 1701 and were beyond question, with their attendants, the first white women who ever passed this way. Probably their immediate successors were French Canadian women of humble habitant stock, who in the early years of the Eighteenth century, went with their families to the Detroit. Some women, too, were brought into our region as captives of the Indians. One such episode, typical of many, has come to my knowledge with some fullness of record, and although the scene of the incident is the Alleghany Valley and Fort Duquesne, I venture to relate it as typifying experiences of this frontier in the days of the French.

At Fort Duquesne there was one day brought into the fort, among other prisoners, a young woman, Rachel by name. Captured by Indians on the frontiers of Virginia, she had witnessed the burning of her home, the murder of her family. As the captives were marched through the wilderness, her last surviving relative, an aunt, being unable to walk fast enough to suit her savage captors, was brained by a blow of the tomahawk. When finally at the gates of Fort Duquesne, the young Rachel, with other captives, had to undergo the ordeal of running the gauntlet; the huge fist of a savage smote her in the face; one eye was ruined. So grievous was her state that she was taken from the Indians and put in the care of the post surgeon. During convalescence she learned French and—to quote an old record—"as she was pretty and of sweet and affectionate character, she touched without thinking to, the heart of a Canadian." Happy Canadian, to find in a world of horrors so sweet a rose! He went to the commandant and asked to marry her, but there were difficulties—Rachel was a Protestant. The garrison priest tenderly instructed her in the essentials of his faith. Rachel became a Catholic, the commandant agreed that the soldier might marry, the priest was on the point of saying the happy service, when suddenly appeared the savage who had captured her, and claimed Rachel

as his own! His she was by all the usages of the frontier; to withhold her meant an Indian attack on the none too capable garrison. The commandant resorted to strategy, and while the sulky and threatening savage was being assured that he should have his pretty white slave, presently, the hastily wedded pair were set off by night in a canoe with a little food and a gun to get more,—and three months later arrived at New Orleans, well, and we must believe, still happy. Does any modern bride doubt that there were wedding trips in the "good old days," let her imagination dwell on those three months of canoe-journey. Does any modern novelist seek a historic setting for the one tale that never grows old, let him follow for a little the experiences of the Canadian soldier and his sweet though one-eyed bride. He at least will admit that invention cannot equal the things that are true.

Then there is the story of the woman, who had been the wife of a soldier in Braddock's army, and was taken prisoner by the French at Braddock's defeat. Her captors carried her to Fort Niagara, where she was long detained, and where, supposing her husband killed, she married a French subaltern, by whom she had a child. When Niagara fell she, with her husband and child, shared the common fate of the French captives; but when with six hundred other prisoners, she reached Albany, as they defiled before the multitude of curious on-lookers, she suddenly beheld in the crowd her English husband! Something of the dramatic the situation surely had, as he whom she supposed long since dead on Braddock's Field, now appeared, a sturdy soldier of King George, on duty in Albany town. There was, beyond question, a halt in the march, a gathering of the crowd—in short, a scene. The English soldier demanded his long-lost spouse; and—in the words of a chronicler who saw what he reported, "after some struggles of tenderness for her French husband, she left him and closed again with her first; tho' 'tis said the French husband insisted on keeping the child as his property, which was consented to by the wife and first husband."

Did time allow we might go on at length with tales of this or that phase of those by-gone days. Especially is the French period important in the history of inland transportation,

of the evolution of trade routes and of lake commerce. I have tried to show how the events of that time link up with the chain of American progress. But in the merely local view, with the passing of French power, the surrender of the French frontier forts and the withdrawal of soldier and agent, of trader, trapper and boatman, there vanished from Western New York every trace of the long sway of France. Here and there remains a French name that still clings to some stream, some isle or lakeside point; but of material survivals save one or two structures on the Niagara there is nothing to remind us of the long occupancy of France. Nothing until we turn to the abundant records; and there, in the chronicles of the missions, of the fur trade, of the military expeditions, of all the wild adventurous life in the forest and on the Lakes, we find an historic background rich in episode significant to the student. And when we trace the succeeding years—the period of the American Revolution, of the great land deals of Western New York, of survey and pioneer settlement, of the myriad phases of the later years, we can but be impressed with the abounding richness of our regional history. And, my friends, whose tolerant patience I have so taxed, is it not true, that if the past in this our homeland has been rich in significant events, our present is equally rich in opportunity!

THE NEW YORK STATE ARCHEOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION.

Lewis H. Morgan Chapter.

The object of this Chapter shall be to promote historical study and intelligent research covering the artifacts, rites, customs, beliefs and other phases of the lives of the aboriginal occupants of New York State up to and including contact with the whites; to preserve the mounds, ruins and other evidences of these people, and to co-operate with the State Association in effecting a wider knowledge of New York State Archeology, and to help secure legislation for needed ends. Also to maintain sympathetic appreciation of the history of the American Indians, particularly of those now resident in New York State, to the end that all of their ancient wrongs and grievances may be righted agreeably to their just desires both as to property and citizenship.

Also to publish papers covering the results of field work of members or other matters within the purview of the Chapter.

All persons interested in these subjects are invited to become members of the Association or of the local Chapter nearest to them.

The Association and its Chapters plan to issue a uniform series of transactions and researches covering all fields consistent with the objects of the Association.

All members of the Association or of its constituent Chapters are issued a membership certificate suitable for framing and a pocket membership card serving as an introduction in the field where collecting is contemplated.

The Association is approved by the State Education Department, University of the State of New York, and is working in co-operation with the State Museum.

Address all correspondence to Alvin H. Dewey, Box 185, Rochester, N. Y., or Walter H. Cassebeer, 236 Meigs St., Rochester, N. Y., or Dr. Arthur C. Parker, State Museum, Albany, N. Y.

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